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Soaked suburbanites living along the Des Plaines River, some already suffering after record levels of flooding, are bracing for more misery today as forecasters predict waters may not recede for days.

Based on predictions of overnight rainfall of three quarters to an inch, the National Weather Service said the river will not crest until Wednesday morning at Gurnee, one of the hardest hit suburbs along the Des Plaines, suburbia's north-south water artery. On Monday, Gurnee recorded river levels more than 4 feet above flood stage and may break a record.

A few dozen homes were evacuated there, the old downtown was swamped, and the main east-west street, Route 132, was closed. Schools were to be closed today for the second day.

Elmer Fallos, whose Gurnee home is only a few hundred yards from the river, dealt with what he called "the cleanup and the tears." His home was surrounded by sandbags and a pump spouted water from his basement.

Still, after it all dries out, he is staying.

"For the little bit of inconvenience we have to deal with every once in a while, it's worth it," Fallos said.

Upriver at Russell, near the Wisconsin state line, a record 10.88 feet was measured at midday. Near the northwest suburb of Des Plaines, water was measured at 6.85 feet -- a foot and three quarters above flood stage -- and the National Weather Service said the level may climb to 11.3 feet by Thursday afternoon, a record.

In Riverside, moderate flooding was expected as the weather service predicted the river cresting in the western suburb Thursday afternoon at 8.2 feet -- 2.2 feet above flood stage. Already minor flooding of parks was reported there.

"Over the last couple weeks, we've had large storms that dropped inches here and inches there and that's what put us here," said Arlan Juhl of the Illinois Office of Water Resources.

Juhl said in rapidly urbanizing areas, new homes and businesses also contribute to river flooding. "Development creates more runoff because there's more pavement and rooftops and not as much water will [soak] into the ground," said Juhl. "That increases the total volume water that a river" has to contain.

Monday evening, mayors and managers of about a dozen suburbs along the Des Plaines River met in Gurnee with U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) for a briefing by state and federal emergency officials. Kirk said the last big flood in the area, in 1986, caused more than \$100 million in damage and 7,000 people were forced out of their homes.

"Now, only 40 homes flooded," said Kirk, crediting a number of flood control projects including expanding reservoirs, adding new ones and creating more flood plains near Wadsworth.

Still, Kirk added, suburbs need to be stricter in prohibiting development in flood plains. In 2001, Gurnee targeted for village purchase 44 homes and businesses built in the downtown flood plain. Nine have been bought, Gurnee officials said.

Persuading people to move out of flood areas can be difficult.

"Everybody says to me, 'Why do you stay?' " said Fran Thiele, who lives in the flooded Big Bend neighborhood of Des Plaines, a peninsula that juts out into the Des Plaines River near Rand and River roads.

The fence-free backyards give the area a golf course-like spaciousness. Neighbors sit in their backyards to watch the river and deer, turtles and beavers. Some have balconies, backyard saunas and even an orchid greenroom overlooking the river.

"When you're here, you think you're way out in the country," Thiele said. "But you're close to town."

Still, a river in full torrent can be dangerous. Elgin officials warned residents to be careful of rising Poplar and Tyler creeks, which have "deceptively fast moving currents" as they dealt with a rising Fox River, expected to be at about 1.2 feet above flood stage this morning.

The Lake County Health Department warned flood water can cause disease-causing organisms and instructed people to watch for nausea, diarrhea and muscle aches. Those with open wounds are at especially high risk for tetanus.

Dislodged manhole covers can cause whirlpools that can suck children and adults to their death, the health department added.

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